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Despite these enormous profits, nearly a third of all Native American families that were supposed to benefit from IGRA remain in poverty.

Why?

Part of the answer lies in the fundamental flaws inherent in the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act. This act was created with the intent of providing economic opportunity and growth to Native Americans groups who had been living without basic necessities on poverty-stricken reservations for generations. Unfortunately, it has done little to help its intended recipients and, instead, has opened the door to multi-billion dollar tribal gaming monopolies that benefit a select few. This unintended consequence has additionally resulted in the creation of a culture of ethical dishonesty and corruption that has crept into the federal lobbying industry, most notably with the infamous Jack Abramoff scandal in 2006. Regrettably, reports of federal lobbyists signing contracts for a percentage of future casino profits with Native American groups petitioning for tribal recognition continue to show up every year. In fact, I actually possess one such contract signed between a lobbyist firm and a petitioning tribal group in Orange County for future casino profits. Clearly, the lucrative casino industry born out of IGRA has blurred the line between valid Native American heritage and "fly-by-night" groups who would falsely claim Native American bloodlines in order to dishonestly profit from this well-intentioned law.

In recent years, several small, tribal groups of no more than two dozen or less have tried to gain federal acknowledgement in order to build casinos in Berkeley, San Diego, Garden Grove, and

South Orange County . (The proposed casino in Berkeley would have been the largest casino on earth!) Even as I write this, considerable efforts are taking place among very small groups of people to gain the right to build casinos in lucrative urban areas where economic opportunity abounds. These groups are not made up of thousands of people who lost their ancestral lands to remote reservations with sparse resources. These are handfuls of professional individuals tracing small fractions of Indian ancestry in order to become federally recognized tribes for the sole reason of making billions of dollars off of gambling.

I have introduced H.R. 3752 to encourage legitimate Native American groups to continue to file for federal acknowledgement while, simultaneously, eliminating fraudulent petitions and lobbyist corruption. My legislation would place a 25 year moratorium on class III casino gaming rights for any new Indian tribes recognized by the federal government upon its enactment. This moratorium would apply to tribes that receive acknowledgement both through application to Bureau of Indian Affairs and through recognition by statute. A Native American group should be evaluated solely upon the history and background of its people, not through undue influence by lobbyists and casino money. Indian gaming rights should not be a factor in the tribal acknowledgement process.